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Probable SS-N-18 SLBM Follow-on Popup Testing, USSR (S)

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PROBABLE SS-N-18 SLBM FOLLOW-ON POPUP TESTING, USSR (S)

INTRODUCTION

1. (S/WN) Activity at Balaklava Missile Test Center (USSR, in February and early March 1982 indicated that the Soviets have begun popup testing of a liquid-fueled follow-on to the SS-N-18 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM). The test program will use popup test platform 8 (Figure 1), which was originally constructed for the SS-NX-20 popup program. The platform was modified at Sevastopol Shipyard Sevmorzavod 497 (to accommodate the new missile. 25X1 25X1

2. (S/WN) Activity at the missile test center in 1981 suggested that a new SLBM would be tested and that the missile would be liquid fueled. A new liquid-propellant service area was constructed. Fuel/oxidizer trailers and support vehicles were brought to the test center and two trailers, previously used as missile transporters in the SS-NX-20 program, were refurbished and covered with canvas.

ACTIVITY SUMMARY

3. (S/WN) A canvas-covered probable SLBM airframe was observed on imagery of on a trailer in front of a fuel dispensing structure in the new liquid-propellant service area (Figure 2). The probable airframe (approximately 14 meters long and 2 meters in diameter) was aligned with guide rails on the floor of the fuel dispensing structure. A MAZ prime mover, probably used to tow the airframe trailer, was on the opposite side of the structure. Concurrently in the missile handling area, a nitrogen vehicle was next to a small support building, and a missile dolly was in front of the high-bay checkout building (Figure 3). The nitrogen vehicle was probably one of two that have always been seen in the missile storage area. The two nitrogen vehicles were part of a septet of fuel/oxidizer trailers and other support vehicles brought to the test center in mid-1981. The movement of the nitrogen vehicles was the first activity observed involving any of these vehicles since their arrival, suggesting that test activity was commencing. 25X1 25X1

4. (S/WN) A probable propellant loading operation was underway at the new propellant service area on The probable missile airframe was not visible and had probably been placed on the guide rails in the propellant dispensing structure. Six vehicles, including one firetruck, one water truck, one nitrogen vehicle, a propellant transfer vehicle, and one MAZ prime mover were positioned around the structure (Figure 4). A fuel/oxidizer trailer (inset, Figure 4), missing from its normal location in the missile storage area on was probably beneath the structure. 25X1 25X1

5. (S/WN) The activity in the new liquid-fuel service area had ended by All the vehicles, including the fuel/oxidizer trailer, had returned to the missile storage area. One of the refurbished missile transporters in the missile handling area had been moved, suggesting that the transporter had been used to move the probable airframe (Figure 5). 25X1

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6. (S/WN) Related activity was observed at Balaklava Submarine Base and Ship Repair Yard [redacted] a large floating crane was brought to the base and positioned in the popup platform maintenance/checkout area, probably in preparation for loading the airframe into popup platform 8. Between [redacted] popup platform 8 departed the base and popup testing of the new airframe probably took place during this period. The platform had returned to the base by [redacted] and was moored outboard the floating crane. 25X1 25X1 25X1

7. (S/WN) Concurrently with the return of the popup platform, a probable purging operation was underway at the propellant service area. The probable missile airframe was on the guide rails under the dispensing structure on [redacted] the airframe had been removed from the guide rails and had been placed on a canvas-covered missile transporter. The transporter was under the dispensing structure adjacent to the guide rails, which were now empty (Figure 7). Balaklava was not covered on usable imagery again until [redacted] By that time, all activities had ceased in the propellant service area. The missile transporter had returned to the missile handling area, probably delivering the airframe to the assembly/checkout building for posttest examination. 25X1 25X1

IMAGERY ANALYST'S COMMENTS

8. (S/WN) The length of the probable airframe, 14 meters, is compatible with the length of an SS-N-18 [redacted] considering that part of the nose cone may not be present during a propellant loading operation. The SS-N-8 is only [redacted] long with the nose cone. This strongly suggests that airframe observed in this sequence of events is a follow-on to the SS-N-18 and not to the SS-N-8. 25X1 25X1

IMAGERY

(S/WN) All applicable satellite imagery acquired through [redacted] was used in the preparation of this report. 25X1

(S) Comments and queries regarding this report are welcome. They may be directed to [redacted] Soviet Strategic Forces Division, Imagery Exploitation Group, NPIC, [redacted] 25X1 25X1

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